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Official Records

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New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

International Day of Peace

The President: I wish to remind members that, in accordance with resolution 55/282 of 7 September 2001, today the Assembly is observing the International Day of Peace.

Address by Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: I take this opportunity, Madam President, to warmly congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. My delegation welcomes your leadership and assures you of our unwavering support as you carry out your duties. We are confident that under your able leadership the reform programmes of the United Nations will be advanced.

I also take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for the leadership he provided in steering the affairs of the sixtieth session. My delegation noted with satisfaction the service he rendered, and also noted that under his presidency positive advances were made towards the reform of the United Nations.

Malawi welcomes the admission of the Republic of Montenegro as the 192nd Member of the United Nations. Malawi wishes President Filip Vujanovic and the people of the Republic of Montenegro continued peace and prosperity as they chart the way forward and take their place in the United Nations.

At the end of this year we bid farewell to Mr. Kofi Annan, who has served as Secretary-General for two consecutive terms. I am happy to join previous speakers in paying tribute to Mr. Annan for the dynamic leadership he has provided to the United Nations during his tenure of office.

Mr. Annan had many achievements, but perhaps one of the greatest was his ability to remain calm and well focused under great pressure. During his tenure of office the United Nations faced daunting challenges, including the fight against famine, hunger and natural disasters in many parts of the world; civil wars in Africa and conflicts in the Middle East and the Gulf region; international terrorism; and the fight against HIV/AIDS. It is therefore with great pleasure that, on behalf of the people of Malawi, and on my own behalf, I honour and pay tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan for his sterling service to the United Nations. I trust that he

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will continue to be of service to humanity in other capacities.

The theme of this year's session, "Implementing a global partnership for development," is very pertinent, because during the 2005 session we renewed the mandate of the United Nations to meet the challenges of the millennium, such as eradicating global poverty and injustice, and the promotion of democracy, human rights, peace, security and stability in Member nations. We asserted that these are essential ingredients for sustainable economic and social development and that they are interlinked and mutually reinforcing in the quest for the betterment and well-being of humanity as a whole.

I believe that in the search for global partnership for development the greatest challenge that the United Nations faces is to eradicate the poverty that engulfs the majority of humanity.

I believe that global peace, security and stability cannot be assured if the greater section of humanity lives in abject poverty. It is our hope that those who have will learn to share with those who do not have.

In order to present to the Assembly the need for a global partnership framework as a way to achieve a faster and sustainable rate of economic growth, let me use my own country as an example. In Malawi we have determined priorities to fast track socio-economic growth for the people. We are cognizant that in a poor nation like ours everything becomes a priority, but we have agreed on a set of "priorities within priorities" that we want to implement in the next five years. These are agriculture and food security, irrigation and water development, transport and communications infrastructure, energy, integrated rural development and the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS. We believe that, when fully implemented, these sectors will, together, pull our people out of poverty.

We have given the highest priority to agriculture and food security because this sector is a mainstay of our economy and we intend to make Malawi a hunger-free nation. We are assisting smallholder and peasant farmers to increase their productivity in food and cash crops by providing cheap fertilizers and high-quality farm inputs. This will provide food security as well as expand agro-processing industries, and it will mean adding value to our products. We seek international support in this area.

Secondly, we need international partnership in irrigation and water development. This would reduce our country's dependence on rain-fed agriculture. We aim at having small-, medium- and large-scale irrigation schemes and the construction of multi-purpose dams throughout the country. This will enable Malawi to produce enough food even when rains fail.

Thirdly, we consider transport and communications infrastructure to be essential for growth and development and, indeed, a good candidate for international partnership. We are convinced that through well developed road networks we will not only improve movement of goods and services from rural areas to the urban centres, but also enhance domestic and international trade.

More importantly, Malawi seeks global partnership in opening up access to the Indian Ocean through the existing Shire-Zambezi waterway, which is navigable all the way from an inland port in Malawi to the port of Chinde, in Mozambique, on the Indian Ocean, only 238 kilometres away. This waterway would benefit Malawi and other southern African countries, especially Mozambique, Zambia, Rwanda, Burundi and Zimbabwe.

Fourthly, Malawi has selected energy as another area of international partnership. We believe that it is imperative for our country to develop adequate and reliable energy for agriculture, irrigation, transport, industry and all other areas of economic transformation.

Fifthly, Malawi would welcome international partnership in promoting integrated rural development aimed at eradicating poverty among the rural communities. We have recognized that the economic stratification of our country is such that the greater percentage of the people live in rural areas in squalid conditions. We seek donor support to boldly take development to rural areas through promoting rural growth centres.

Lastly, Malawi seeks international partnership in HIV/AIDS prevention and management. We recognize that our country on its own, without the full support of the international community, cannot successfully wage the battle against HIV/AIDS. I am happy to say that during the past two years Malawi has made tremendous progress in AIDS awareness campaigns, the supply of anti-retroviral drugs and voluntary testing.

This is Malawi's agenda for implementing a global partnership for development. I am submitting this agenda to the United Nations for support.

Before I end my statement, I need to mention two important issues.

First, through a global partnership, Malawi has reached the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. I and the people of Malawi are truly grateful that our multilateral debts have been cancelled by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. We thank the [G-8 countries for spearheading the Initiative and for their commitment to it. We believe that this is a true example of global partnership in development.

The second issue that is germane to global partnership is for me to reiterate my plea for the readmission of the Republic of China – Taiwan — as a Member of the United Nations. Many of those present will agree that since the end of the cold war, and with the advent of globalization, Taiwan has quietly contributed to the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in various areas, including technology, medicine, research, industry and international trade. That contribution becomes increasingly important, especially within the principle of universality, equity and justice.

Let me conclude by drawing attention to the report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all", by Mr. Kofi Annan, who stated:

> "The right to choose how they are ruled, and who rules them, must be the birthright of all people, and its universal achievement must be a central objective of an Organization devoted to the cause of larger freedom." (*A/59/2005, para. 148*)

To me, such larger freedom means the freedom of every nation to belong to the United Nations, the freedom from oppression of one nation by another, and freedom for every nation to contribute to the global partnership for development. These are the freedoms of the United Nations that should be cherished and upheld.

I therefore appeal to the Security Council to reconsider the fact that Taiwan should be granted observer status in the United Nations and its specialized agencies, pending a full review of its membership. I am convinced that continued denial of Taiwan's participation in the community of nations poses a moral and legal challenge to the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

> *Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

Address by Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

> *Mr. Boris Tadic, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tadić (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): First, I sincerely thank Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for all the efforts he has made throughout his very successful mandate during a time of enormous challenges facing our civilization. I particularly single out his exceptional understanding of the problems that south-eastern Europe has faced and is still facing.

I also congratulate you, Madam President, on your election.

At the same time, I warmly welcome the accession of Montenegro to the United Nations as a new Member State.

I am addressing the General Assembly today as President of the Republic of Serbia, an independent and democratic State in south-eastern Europe, in the Balkans. I assure the Assembly that Serbia seeks to make a significant contribution to this part of the world — in terms of fast democratization and respect for human rights, economic development, the security of the entire Balkans and the stability of south-eastern Europe. Instead of being a place where problems are created, Serbia and the Balkans must become a place where problems are resolved in a peaceful manner.

Serbia is simultaneously a new and an old State — new, because its flag is flying for the first time in front of this building, and old, because already in 1835 its Constitution guaranteed freedom to any man setting foot on its soil; new, because it is being created against the backdrop of the specific challenges of the twenty-first century, and old, because it is created in accordance with the very principles it helped to establish and embody in the Charter of the United Nations in 1945.

Today Serbia is an active Member of the United Nations. We believe that the decisions made under the Organization's auspices have to form the basis of stability and prosperity for all States and peoples in south-eastern Europe.

Serbia believes in a shared and prosperous future for the Balkans. It is important to stress that none of the current problems in the Balkans can be viewed or resolved in isolation, without taking into account our common history and a vision of our shared future. Hence, in dealing with any problem in the Balkans, it is necessary to hear and give weight to the opinions of all countries in the region.

I trust that a better future for our part of the world will be based upon three major principles: democracy, as a guarantor of human freedom and the basis of economic progress; the security of each State, as a precondition for the security of the entire Balkans; and regional stability, as a vital factor of global peace and prosperity. All the challenges we face should be tackled in accordance with those principles.

In that spirit, Serbia is sincerely committed to the territorial integrity of all Balkan States and the preservation of their existing borders. In the same vein, the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the Dayton Accords, which may be changed by its citizens only with the consensus of all three constituent peoples, is an essential factor in the stability and further democratization of the region. By the same token, the preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia is in the interest of democracy and the prosperity of all of south-eastern Europe.

Strengthening regional cooperation is Serbia's priority. That is why we believe that the prosperity of all neighbouring countries is in the interest of Serbia. We are aware that the Balkan countries can make progress and achieve their primary foreign policy objective — European Union and Euro-Atlantic membership — only through cooperation.

In this regional framework, we also wish to actively cooperate in the fight against organized crime, corruption and international terrorism. As a concrete contribution to this goal, at my initiative, a meeting of the Heads of State of south-eastern Europe will soon be held in Belgrade, aimed at promoting communication and strengthening cooperation in the fight against these threats to the life and prosperity of us all.

Serbia sees the Balkans as a common space, in which it is possible to achieve political and social stability. The achievement of that goal should be an important contribution to efforts conducive to full democratization and peace. It is based on the principle of shared responsibility of all Balkan States. That is why none of the Balkan States must feel a loser as we move closer to a joint European future.

Kosovo and Metohija is currently under United Nations interim administration. The settlement of Kosovo's future status is one of the most difficult problems facing Serbia, the other Balkan countries and the international community, as well as the Albanian and Serbian people in Kosovo. That is why we believe that this problem should be addressed in a strategic and substantive manner in order to arrive at a solution that will take into account the full complexity of relations in the Balkans. That poses certain requirements: to face the past, to find sustainable solutions for the present and to open up avenues of cooperation in the future.

But, of course, this does not imply that the Kosovo case is unique, different from all others. On the contrary, the Kosovo problem must be approached on the basis of recognized principles of international law and universal democratic values. If there is failure in that, we shall not be able to escape the vicious circle of old animosities and mutual recriminations.

What it seeks for itself, Serbia seeks for the province, too: promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, economic prosperity and security. In order to contribute to that goal, Serbia has decided to ensure power supply this winter from its own resources to Kosovo's population.

It is in the interest of Serbia that Kosovo be stable, prosperous, economically viable, multi-ethnic and democratic. Before its future status is determined, it is of crucial importance to establish the rule of law

and put an end to seven years of discrimination against the Serbs as well as other non-Albanian communities, who suffer as the target of extremism and terrorism.

The autonomy offered by Serbia to Kosovo Albanians is broader than any currently enjoyed by any region or federal unit in Europe. In our view, that is a sustainable, stable and long-standing solution that would open a new chapter in the long and difficult history of Serbian-Albanian relations. Among other things, it would enable Kosovo to have direct access to international financial institutions, necessary for its economic recovery and development, which are in the interest of both Serbia and the region as a whole.

Serbia is genuinely committed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, technological advancement and economic prosperity. Large-scale poverty, which unfortunately still prevails, deeply affects human dignity.

Today, 21 September, we observe the International Day of Peace. It is important that it be observed each year in an effort to put an end to wars and violence in the world. Many crises have not yet been resolved, and some continue to escalate dangerously, while new challenges threaten to generate new conflicts, destruction and humanitarian catastrophes.

An important aspect of preserving peace and security is efficient and timely deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces. Serbia supports the efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping, and my country is ready to make an active contribution to these operations. The mandate of peacekeeping operations is today more diverse than it used to be and includes conflict-prevention, peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction and assistance to long-term and sustainable development.

Following several years of conflict, the Balkans is slowly but surely turning into a zone of good-neighbourliness and cooperation. Serbia is prepared to deal with the burden of its recent past in the interest of its Balkan and European future. The people of Serbia started doing this successfully and democratically in 2000, when they removed the regime largely responsible for the hardships that befell Serbia and the Balkans in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Precisely for that reason, we are firmly committed to the successful completion of our cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. This is not merely our international obligation; it is also a question of moral values.

As a responsible State and a part of the international community, Serbia is truly devoted to honouring the Charter of the United Nations and building democracy in the world. Therefore, Serbia is firmly committed to making its full contribution to the strengthening of the role and mandate of the United Nations, as well as to multilateral dialogue leading to equal cooperation among States and peoples, to respect for human rights and freedoms, and to tolerance and mutual respect.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Uribe Vélez (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate you, Madam President, and wish you the greatest success in this session.

Four years ago I attended this global forum for the first time to announce that Colombia was beginning an era of democratic security. I explained why security in our time is a democratic value without which freedoms cannot prosper; it is also a centre of resources, in whose absence investment does not flow and the possibility of eliminating poverty and building equality remains elusive.

Four years ago I explained to the Assembly why our concept of security is democratic and thus deserves the support and confidence of all peoples and of the United Nations.

I am aware that I could not address the Assembly today to propose a theory of democratic security; having been President of my country for four years, I feel compelled to present the results of this policy. Colombia has held four general elections and countless local elections over this period. The referendum and the election of mayors and governors in 2003 were events that tested our democratic meaning of security. This year the presidential and congressional elections, held on two separate dates under a high threat of terrorism, were nonetheless among the most peaceful in many decades. All political groupings enjoyed effective guarantees, regardless of their level of support for or opposition to the Government.

Under democratic security, Colombia has elected mayors, governors and members of Congress of all political colours. Security has contained terrorism in order to give democracy free expression.

There is still much to be done in the area of security, and a definitive peace is not yet within sight, but progress is undeniable. The effective protection of Colombians translates into the reduction in the number of homicides, kidnappings, acts of terrorism, crimes and threats against journalists and trade union leaders. All governors and mayors exercise their powers in their own jurisdictions, overcoming the nightmare of exile that many were subjected to as a result of terrorist actions that were not countered by the State.

To guarantee the sustainability of security over time, our citizens must give it credibility. Our task is to build credibility based on effectiveness and transparency. Consequently, human rights are an imperative of security. In recent years we have increased our security forces by 30 per cent, military operations have tripled, and at the same time complaints against the security forces have fallen by 38 per cent. This is all the more important because we are a country with full internal democracy, completely open to supervision and international criticism, as borne out by the presence of an office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In spite of the work still to be done, the most important achievement is our citizens' positive assessment of security and the collective determination to consolidate it.

We regard organized violence for fictitious political motives as terrorism, and security as the path to peace. When a country has a pluralist, vigorous and guarantee-granting democracy, armed actions against it are pure terrorism. To deny this would erase the difference between armed combat against dictatorships, which merited the recognition of insurgent groups in other countries, and the violent aggression suffered by our democracy, which is terrorism.

The demobilization of more than 40,000 members of violent groups, as a result of democratic security, and the efforts proposed by the country to reintegrate them into constitutional life, prove that for us security is the path to peace and reconciliation.

Talking about 40,000 demobilized is easy; tallying them up is very difficult; demobilizing them is even more difficult; and reintegrating them is a monumental task. Amidst understandable controversy, we have made progress in dismantling irregular forces. Today the vast majority of illegal self-defence groups — which, together with the guerrillas, until two years ago seemed like powers greater than the State — are demobilized, and a large percentage of their leaders are being held by our justice system. These results are more eloquent than rhetoric ever could be. I must add that the number of demobilized guerrillas is higher than the number killed by official forces.

I have come to the United Nations today to ask for resolute support for our security policy and our reintegration programme. The violence in Colombia has received much international media coverage, constant criticism of the Government and little support to overcome it. It is time for the international community to urgently call on violent groups to make peace without any further delay. The Government is as firm in implementing security as it is rigorous in respecting democratic rules, and is open and generous in looking for peace. A sincere willingness for peace will not face governmental obstacles to a definitive reconciliation.

The international community must support our security policy more decisively. This will bring quicker results from our overcoming violence and seeking peace.

The financing of violent groups by illicit drugs is one of the fundamental aspects that differentiate those groups from former guerrillas in other Latin American countries. This criminal, bottomless and autonomous financing is the main obstacle to peace.

It grieves me to say that progress in the fight against illicit drugs has been small compared with the sacrifice made by the people of Colombia and the Government's willingness to eradicate those drugs. The number of extradited citizens, the confiscation of illicit wealth and the areas sprayed represent enormous efforts, but the results are not proportional. For the second straight year, we have a programme for massive manual eradication, which will mean 70,000 hectares of coca destroyed.

Production and consumption require a global commitment transcending formal declarations, so as to increasingly apply programmes that reflect actions of shared responsibility.

There are successful alternative development projects. A few weeks ago, the United Nations positively assessed the forest keeper families programme, which covers 43,000 rural families that have replaced drug cultivation with protection of the forest and the growing of alternative crops. Some, such as those in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, offer ecotourism services. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, drugs have been eliminated in 80 per cent of the area of the forest keeper families, covering 2 million hectares. More than 136,000 hectares of tropical forest have been reclaimed. Thanks to payments by the Government, these families have already acquired more than 30,000 hectares of productive land. Nevertheless, to protect a high percentage of the Colombian Amazon jungle and tropical forest, we need to reach 120,000 families. That is a great budgetary challenge, requiring more general and decisive international support.

The programme halts the cutting down of tropical forest and the Amazon jungle, which have suffered the destruction of nearly 2 million hectares because of drugs. I ask the world: why is there not less rhetoric and a greater and more effective commitment, so that Colombia, which is absolutely willing to achieve it, may finally and definitively overcome the scourge of illegal drugs?

We Colombians do not want to be left with efforts and sacrifices; we require results. We are willing to revise our strategy and improve it, but we need the entire world to get involved with us. I ask the United Nations for additional efforts to help us find ways to be effective.

We reiterate our enthusiastic commitment to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Social cohesion, overcoming poverty and building equity are essential aspirations of our democracy. In 2002 poverty reached almost 60 per cent of the population; in 2005 it was down to 49 per cent. We will do everything possible to ensure that it does not exceed 35 per cent by 2010 and to reach the goal of 15 per cent by 2019, the second centenary of our independence. Fortunately, the Gini coefficient is beginning to show a trend towards correction in income distribution.

Our goals for the upcoming four-year period are ambitious: achieving full coverage in health and basic education and significant progress in basic sanitation and providing microcredit for 5 million poor families.

We want a modern democracy with security, freedom, social cohesion, transparency and independent institutions. This is our dream; this is what we are fighting for. We want a nation without exclusions and without class hatred, with harmony, rectitude and prosperity; a nation in permanent democratic dialogue, with fraternity and without insurmountable antagonisms; a nation integrated into multilateralism, grateful for the efforts of the United Nations, receptive to the international community's suggestions and willing to share its experiences and improve its results.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Émile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Émile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Émile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lahoud: Today, I am honoured as I congratulate you, Madam President, on your election as the first Arab woman to ever preside over this body, hoping that this heralds a new era of better understanding of women's aspirations and Arab causes.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for all that he has done for Lebanon and for the cause of peace in the region and the world as a whole.

I stand before the Assembly representing a terribly scarred country, a country whose ordeal is well known to members — my ravaged country, Lebanon. From 12 July through 14 August, my country was subjected to a barbarous aggression and to a rarely seen campaign of savage dismemberment, when hundreds of fighter jets emptied their loads of heavy and banned bombs, targeting mostly civilians, killing and maiming thousands, and destroying everything that made Lebanon a viable State. Obviously, this was a premeditated Israeli "sentence" to destroy my country and everything it stood for, it having been blessed and termed by His Holiness Pope John Paul II a "unique message to humanity," that we can live together. This aggression became even more cruel when it won the tacit approbation of certain great powers.

Regretably, the Security Council looked powerless in its attempts to stop the slaughter of Lebanon's children and protect the peace in Lebanon and the Middle East. It took over a month and numerous calls for an immediate ceasefire for all those concerned to finally force a mere cessation of hostilities, which is yet to become a formal and final ceasefire.

It becomes self-evident for us to question the credibility of the United Nations in light of the Secretary-General's acknowledgment that the delays in adopting Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) did indeed harm its credibility. Moreover, we cannot but have serious doubts as to this Organization's ability to safeguard world peace when its resolutions are subjected to the vagaries of a very few world powers.

Today I ask: How many children, like the one in the photograph that I am holding up, will die because nobody does anything for them? How many children was this evil, vengeful machine of destruction supposed to have killed, before the world community decided to respond in defence of a "rightful" cause? Allow us to ask these questions, as we are filled with a deep sense of grief, when scores of our fallen citizens are still beneath the rubble.

Let me reassure the Assembly that this savagery did not weaken our people's resolve nor shake its resilience as it rallied around its army and Government and embraced its national resistance, whose men faced occupation forces with epic valour, preventing their advance, and presenting Lebanon with yet another victory, in the name of justice and dignity.

While we stand under the United Nations umbrella to warn the world of the dire consequences we shall all face when the very foundations of this world body are shaken, it is also time to ask Israel, which owes its very existence to a United Nations resolution, to finally abide by past and recent resolutions.

As of 14 August this year, Lebanon has once again, without a shadow of a doubt, reasserted the fact that it is a nation that respects its commitments, while it implements international resolutions and proceeds to deploy 15,000 Lebanese army soldiers on the border between Lebanon and Israel — while Israel continues its daily breaches of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), having imposed a humiliating siege on Lebanon, and refusing to withdraw from the Lebanese territory in the Shaba'a farms sector, whose liberation remains Lebanon's sacred right and duty. To this day, Israel continues to treat the people of Lebanon as hostages, kidnapping at will scores of its citizens, in a flagrant breach of that resolution.

Finally, Israel refuses to surrender to the United Nations the maps showing thousands of mines it left behind on Lebanese territory, while the case and fate of Lebanon's prisoners in Israel remains very ambiguous, and no clear resolution of their ordeal is addressed anywhere.

Today, for the sake of peace, the world community is called upon to save Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) from oblivion, a fate that characterized scores of previous resolutions.

Here, on behalf of a grateful country, I solemnly salute the fallen soldiers of peace who will hence share their obituary with that of our brave army soldiers and of our valiant resistance fighters, victims of prohibited weaponry, first tested by Israel on our soil and subject to an international investigation. We are hopeful that this time the world community will allow the investigation to reach its natural conclusion. This will constitute a clear indictment of Israel for its recurring violations of international conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We also hope that the United States will not resort to its unfailing veto, thus allowing for the indictment of Israel's actions in sympathy for the thousands of innocent civilians who were killed and maimed by the "smart", cluster and phosphorus bombs, and those laced with depleted uranium.

Inspired by the principles and treaties of the United Nations, Lebanon retains the right of action to prosecute Israel before the competent bodies, most notably this Assembly, or the International Criminal Court, and to request the appropriate reparations for all the catastrophes Israel has inflicted on Lebanon.

I ask the Assembly today to stand by my country, as that will be recorded as a just and rightful stance. I also call upon it to differentiate between he who defends his country against Israeli aggression and occupation, and who strives to liberate his countrymen from decades of unlawful imprisonment, and those elements that perpetrate acts of wanton slaughter against their countrymen and others equally. I remind the Assembly that Lebanon's experience with the scourge of terror goes back a long way, and has taken a very heavy toll on its armed forces.

The most recent aggression against Lebanon has left this small country terribly scarred, afflicted with thousands of dead and wounded, and a toll of destruction including several thousand housing units and hundreds of bridges, ports, airports and factories. And my message is: the will of our people to live and move forward has proved to be much stronger than defeat and despair. In record time, the people of Lebanon launched a campaign of reconstruction, made even more successful by instant comforting gestures of goodwill from many friends, at home and abroad. With such overwhelming support and assistance Lebanon will beat all the odds by achieving a stellar rebirth, thereby scoring another point in favour of humanity.

There is ample talk today of the need to reach a permanent and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, which Lebanon has stressed for decades. However, we are quick to point out that no such peace can be achieved in the Middle East without addressing the root cause of instability there, namely, the Arab-Israeli dispute and its core issue, Palestine.

Despite the horrid events in Lebanon, a window of opportunity has presented itself, and it should be fully exploited in order to reinvigorate the Middle East peace initiative, founded on the Arab peace initiative adopted during the Beirut Arab Summit of 2002.

The Arab peace initiative remains the suitable means to achieve a permanent, comprehensive and just peace, because it simply calls for the implementation of all United Nations resolutions as they pertain to the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab lands, and for the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes. Only such a settlement will be capable of affording Lebanon and the neighbouring countries the stability and security they long for and will give Israel a sense of security — something it has failed to obtain through sheer force and aggression. Moreover, this should put an end to the haemorrhage in the Palestinian territories and foster moderation where despair has bred extremism and violence, most notably in Iraq, where it is vital for all of us to help that tortured Arab nation preserve its territorial integrity and the unity of its people.

Today there is incessant talk of a new Middle East as a harbinger of better things to come, and this prompts us to ask the following question. Is what we have witnessed in Lebanon and continue to see in Palestine and Iraq conducive to an environment of peace and tranquillity? Is this much heralded new Middle East attainable only through widespread strife, unimaginable bloodshed, sedition and oppression?

Our conception of a new Middle East is one that is coherent with United Nations resolutions, and that is in concurrence with the principles of justice and right as stipulated in those resolutions. Our idea of a new Middle East is one where a comprehensive peace settlement becomes reality, guaranteeing the rights of all; where Palestinian refugees return home, as stipulated in resolution 194 (III), which comes long before Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), and therefore are not resettled in host countries; and where prisoners return to their loved ones.

This is the only way to attain a stable Middle East. All else will plunge our region into further upheaval and bloodshed.

Should our conception of peace in the Middle East become reality, I assure the Assembly that the need for conferences, studies and discussions of terrorism will become moot. Should this happen in tandem with serious attempts to combat poverty and sustain acceptable levels of development in areas of need, this will certainly dry up the pools where terrorism draws its human and financial support.

I have recently read one of your statements, Madam President, in which you emphasize that overhauling the United Nations will be one of your top priorities. I commend you for that position, because no one appreciates the need for world peace more than the people of the Middle East, as we recognize that the preservation of world peace requires a United Nations capable of taking decisions and competent to see them through.

Here, I would like to reiterate what I said from this very rostrum only last year:

> "The core values of a democratic and just world are best served by enhancing the capabilities of the United Nations and its instruments, and by reinforcing in-house democratic values." (*A/60/PV.13, p.1*)

I believed that this institution should remain a sanctuary of world consciousness and "the primary defender of such human values as freedom, justice and peace." (*ibid*)

Perhaps the reforms that have been carried out so far, such as the establishment of a Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, will constitute the necessary incentives for achieving a United Nations capable of safeguarding right and justice.

Taking into consideration current trends in world affairs, I propose to the General Assembly the creation of a commission leading to laying the foundations of a charter of the rights of nations, a charter equal in importance to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a charter imposing on Member States — all States — a code of conduct founded on the principles of justice and the rule of law.

I come here from a country riddled with scars, rising from the rubble and ashes of aggression, to speak of justice. I do not pretend to pontificate from the helm of a tank. Lebanon remains a peace-loving nation, and it extends its hand to all those who share its peaceful vision, founded on a just settlement and extracting as such the seeds of oppression and violence. We trust that the forces of good will prevail in the end, because its flames burn in the heart of the righteous and because the sounds of jubilation will undoubtedly prevail over the beating of war drums and the sibilating of hate and violence.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Émile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Guebuza (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the people and Government of the Republic of Mozambique, and indeed on my own behalf, I would like to place on record our congratulations to the President on her election to preside over the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. We are delighted to see a distinguished daughter of Bahrain in the stewardship of the highest organ of the United Nations.

We reiterate our congratulations to her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, Minister for Foreign

Affairs of Sweden, for his leadership during the sixtieth session. We congratulate him once again on the commendable work done during his tenure of office.

We would also like to pay a glowing tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan for his accomplishments during his mandate as Secretary-General. We commend the devotion and tireless efforts of this son of Africa, our continent, for his work for the promotion of international peace, security and development, as well as for having created the solid foundations for wide-ranging reforms of the United Nations.

One of the issues on which our debate focused last year related to development. We noted with concern then that there was a substantive lack of progress in forging partnerships. In this regard, we salute the President for bringing the theme "Implementing a global partnership for development" for debate at this session.

We live in a very unbalanced world, in which developing countries find themselves in a vicious cycle of dependency and vulnerability. This plight undermines our efforts to address, speedily and successfully, the challenges that prevent our enjoying sounder economic and social growth and weaken our capacity to deal, more effectively and with greater impact, with the various manifestations of poverty and to fight, more vigorously, diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Given our state of development, more often than not we are powerless to prevent or mitigate the impact of natural disasters and environmental degradation. Consequently, poverty prevents the part of our humanity located in developing countries from enjoying the freedom of choice and action that the other part of mankind takes for granted.

The merit of the theme that the President has put forward for our debate is that it gives us yet another opportunity to reflect on issues that we have dealt with in the past in seeking solutions for the remaining challenges imposed by underdevelopment. It also lends itself to a debate of at least three important issues related to the problem of underdevelopment.

The first is that no country alone, however resourceful it may be, can successfully overcome these challenges on its own, at least not in the medium term, because these are challenges noted for their complexity and interrelationships with other global problems and phenomena.

The second point that can be inferred from this theme is that, while underdevelopment can be attributed to or identified with a given country, its consequences transcend national borders. They go beyond geographical boundaries to, on the one hand, affect national security and demography in other countries and, on the other, raise moral obligations of new dimensions, as well as material challenges in other societies.

The third issue relates to a static view of poverty. The poor need to regain their self-confidence so that, like people in other parts of the world, they too can rid themselves of the shackles of poverty. By the same token, those who can assist also need to overcome the deep-rooted view that the poor will not escape from poverty, as they are destined to remain poor. On the other hand, they also need to overcome the preconceived idea that development must be imposed from the outside.

This discussion brings us back to our realization that, given the global nature of the challenges facing us today, we have no choice but to weave together and strengthen the national, regional and global partnerships. As a result of this realization, we adopted the Monterrey Consensus, as well as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Declaration. The expectation was that these consensuses would translate, in concrete terms, into our commitment to forge global partnerships for development. Regrettably, little has been achieved so far. Abject poverty remains a common feature of the majority of developing countries.

Therefore, I urge that we need to reiterate our commitment to work together at various levels for the well-being of humanity. Mankind is not a far-fetched concept. For example, the very fact that the language I am using now can be translated into the other languages of the planet is a clear demonstration of how we belong to the same humanity. Let us, therefore, redouble our efforts so as not to frustrate the expectations of billions of citizens worldwide, in the developed and the developing countries alike. All of them are longing for a fairer, prosperous and peaceful world. Through these partnerships we can also, more effectively, contribute to conflict resolution in Africa, in the Middle East and in the world at large.

At this juncture, we would like to share with the Assembly our experience and views on the role and

place of partnerships to overcome the challenges before us today.

At the national level, we are of the view that the development projects must be owned and driven by their primary and ultimate beneficiaries. In this regard, the Government creates and promotes an environment that facilitates the honing of self-esteem, promotes recourse to individual creativity and supports incremental development. At the same time, the Government encourages and sustains partnerships with other collective development actors, such as civil society organizations, the private sector and international partners in cooperation. The products of this approach to governance include, for example: the second Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty for the period 2006-2009, drawn up with the active participation of civil society organizations; annual meetings with the private sector; meetings of the social partners, with the participation of the Government, trade unions and employers; the national forum for the African Peer Review Mechanism; and the joint review meetings between the Government and the development partners involved in direct budget support.

These partnerships are held together by our adherence to open and inclusive governance. They are also sustained by the collective commitment of various stakeholders engaged in the development of Mozambique to reduce the incidence of absolute poverty from 54 per cent in 2003 to 45 per cent in 2009. The environment of peace and stability in which we live and which we promote also contributes to enhancing these partnerships.

Regional cooperation plays an important role in building and sustaining partnerships for development. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a case in point. Since its birth, SADC has been playing a crucial role in promoting the political, economic and social integration of countries and peoples of the region. At the same time, SADC allows a given number of its member states to take initiatives that further its ultimate objective of a more prosperous region. In accordance with this principle, last August Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe launched the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, a project that aims to transform an area of approximately 35,000 square kilometres, rich in biodiversity, into a development hub.

Viewed as one of the building blocks of the African Union, SADC plays an important role in promoting the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Union road map towards prosperity. We take this opportunity to commend the international community for aligning its assistance ever more closely with the NEPAD priorities. We would also encourage our development partners to increase their support for NEPAD.

By deciding last week in Havana on the continuation of the Non-Aligned Movement's revitalization process, the Non-Aligned Summit put greater emphasis on the role the Movement should play in forging partnerships among the countries of the South, as part of the global partnerships. Thus, the Non-Aligned Movement reinvigorated the Bandung spirit, which, as we all know, inspired the establishment of the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership.

In addition to the Monterrey Consensus, we advocate an increase in international financial support, including official development assistance and foreign direct investment for countries such as ours that have potential for agriculture, agro-industry and tourism.

Similarly, we are in favour of the establishment of a fairer and more favourable global trading system that is more conducive to sustainable development in developing countries. In this context, we regret the lack of progress in the Doha Development Round, and we urge developed countries to be more flexible, within the framework of the World Trade Organization, in their approach to the needs of developing countries. We reiterate this appeal because we are convinced that our partners do not want to witness the perpetuation of the marginalization of developing countries from the global economy.

The assessment made in 2005 indicates that a number of developing countries are making progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Mozambique is part of this positive trend. However, to ensure that it is irreversible, we call upon our development partners to continue to provide substantial and timely support for the priorities identified by the recipient countries. We believe that our partners are also touched, in their souls and in their spirit, by the poverty that still afflicts that part of humanity.

In conclusion, we join previous speakers in emphasizing the need for the United Nations reforms to move forward. We all recognize the United Nations potential to forge effective partnerships for development. Therefore, we reaffirm the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Mozambique to contribute to the success of this reform process, always bearing in mind the need to safeguard the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations.

Mozambique is proud that its Prime Minister, Mrs. Luisa Diogo, is one of the Co-Chairs of the High-level Panel on System-Wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment, established by the Secretary-General. It is our belief that the Panel's report will contribute to the success of the United Nations reforms. A reformed United Nations will be better placed to respond to the international challenges imposed by the need to strengthen international law and multilateralism and to promote partnerships for development and peace worldwide.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Crvenkovski: It is my privilege to address this forum and share with it the views of the Republic of Macedonia on the issues of primary importance on this year's agenda of the General Assembly and of the international community at large.

Terrorism is not a new world issue, but it has unfortunately become our tragic daily reality, thus rapidly gaining new and more devastating dimensions in the increasingly globalized world. We are all affected in one way or another — whether we speak about actual terrorist attacks or threats.

The real question, however, is: can we or should we, the nations of the world, continue to live in that kind of atmosphere, to live in fear, threatened? It would be a failure of humanity, of free spirit and democracy, of prosperity and mankind, and finally, if I may say so, a failure of all of us here at the United Nations. Recently we adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. I believe it was high time that we adopted a unified position and strategy, that all of us gave a strong international response. Comprehensive international cooperation and coordination against this evil is equally important to activities at the national and regional level. We need to have results; the sooner, the better.

Outside this building, when the United Nations is mentioned, for many peoples, even nations, it means hope and help; it means peace; and it means cure. It means also freedom, democracy and safety — it means life. So the United Nations should not be shy to respond, to act and to resolve when it is asked. The United Nations has to react. Only by resolving problems do we make progress. We have to follow and react to the changes and to the new challenges that are incoming.

The overall reform of the United Nations, including better management, must be an ongoing effort. There are still issues from the World Summit Final Document yet to be delivered, such as mandate review and Security Council reform, to name only some. Hopefully, there will be enough understanding and progress achieved on them too.

Last month we had yet another reminder of how fragile world peace actually is. The Middle East again erupted. We have witnessed how difficult it is to restore peace, to hold a ceasefire and to send United Nations peacekeepers there. Macedonia welcomed the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) of 11 August. Macedonia supports the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to provide timely humanitarian assistance to those affected and for the reconstruction of Lebanon.

The United Nations must fight to make a lasting peaceful solution for the Middle East.

From the very beginning the Republic of Macedonia has been part of the international antiterrorist coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it has recently increased its contingents as part of the international forces. Peace- and democracy-building in those two countries remains one of the key challenges for the international community and the Iraqis and Afghans themselves. I again reiterate Macedonia's support for their efforts to rebuild those countries and create a better life for their people.

Last year at the Summit we reaffirmed our commitment to the global partnership for development, as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. It is beyond doubt that every country has a principal responsibility for its own development. However, it is more than obvious that national development efforts must be supported by global actions. The contribution of the private sector and civil society may play a critical role in our common endeavour.

In addition to human rights standard setting, the United Nations, since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has been a guardian of human rights. We trust that the recently established Human Rights Council will give a new impetus in this area. We hope that the Commission's weaknesses will be overcome, but we have to be aware that this requires a strong political commitment on the part of the membership. Guided by the wish to contribute to the work of this important body, we have announced our candidacy for membership for the 2009-2012 period.

Today Macedonia is a stable and functional multi-ethnic democracy. Over recent years we have launched and carried out a large number of reform projects, which have brought us closer to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance. In December last year Macedonia was granted candidate status for European Union membership. Macedonia rightfully expects that the pace of the needed reforms the country is committed to will lead to an opening of the negotiations on joining the European Union. As for NATO, we expect the invitation to join it at the next enlargement summit.

The region of south-eastern Europe to which my country belongs has experienced significant changes in the recent past and made considerable democratic progress: the start of European Union accession negotiations of Croatia and Turkey; Macedonia becoming a candidate country for membership in the European Union; the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Albania; and the opening of the negotiations for the same agreement with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the newly independent State. Furthermore, Romania and Bulgaria are expected to become full European Union members in a few months.

Good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation have been and are among the top priorities of Macedonia's foreign policy. We will continue to pursue such a policy even more vigorously. There is no alternative to dialogue, and all outstanding regional issues should be resolved in that manner. This year the Macedonian delegation will once again introduce in the First Committee a resolution entitled "Maintenance of international security — good-neighbourliness, stability and development in South-Eastern Europe," which is traditionally widely supported and co-sponsored by Member States.

I should like to say a few words about the Kosovo issue and Kosovo's future status. Macedonia fully supports the work of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, and his team on the Kosovo status talks. I stress that every effort should be made to achieve a negotiated settlement mutually acceptable to the parties concerned, in line with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the Contact Group guiding principles. The Republic of Macedonia, with its active good-neighbourly policy, has been a factor that has largely contributed, and continues to contribute, to the final, overall stabilization and positive developments in the region.

Yet there is one important, still pending, issue in this context for the Republic of Macedonia: that of the technical demarcation of our northern border on the Kosovo section, in line with the agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, signed in February 2001, and the recommendations made by the then Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Kai Eide. We urge that this issue be closed in that manner before the final Kosovo status decision is reached.

I am confident that our deliberations will contribute to creating a better world for all. Although the debates at times show how different we are, our differences must not be an obstacle to our common vision. The personification of the hope of mankind for a better tomorrow remains with the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nkurunziza (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour and pleasure to speak here on behalf of my delegation and to take part in this important gathering, where all the Member States of our Organization will consider today's most pressing issues.

I wish to express to the President, on behalf of my delegation and in my own name, our warmest congratulations on her election. We also congratulate Mr. Jan Eliasson on the effective way in which he led the work of the previous session.

We also take this opportunity to express once again my country's support for, and appreciation of, the excellent work of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has led our Organization with courage, lucidity and determination during his term of office.

Burundi is taking part in the sixty-first session of the General Assembly a year after the setting up of democratic institutions. It was a historic event in Burundi for us to have democratically elected institutions, which have just reached the end of their first year in office, the first time this has happened since we gained independence.

This is a good time for us to report to the Assembly on the political, social and economic situation in our country and the efforts that have been made to meet the many challenges that the people of Burundi face. It is also an opportunity for us to address some of the issues of current concern at the regional and global levels.

In the post-conflict situation that my country is going through, the first concern was to re-establish peace and security throughout the country. Carrying out this task was made possible thanks to the deployment in Burundi of a United Nations force and the training of a new national defence force, in accordance with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement of Pretoria. So far, this integration has proceeded uneventfully, and we thank God for this.

The signing of a comprehensive ceasefire on 7 September 2006 by the Government and the last rebel movement, the Palipehutu-FNL movement, encourages us to accelerate the programme for disarming civilians in order to establish peace and security throughout the country. Over the last three months the people have begun to voluntarily hand in to the authorities weapons they acquired during Burundi's crisis. So far about 5,000 weapons have been handed over. The agreement represents a very important stage in the life of our country, which is now going through its reconstruction phase.

The enjoyment of political liberties has become a reality in Burundi, whether in terms of political parties, civil society or the media. With regard to the media, a law has just been passed to create more diverse and more professional press institutions.

We have also just passed an anti-corruption law. Measures to implement it include an anti-corruption court and a force to deal with corruption. We are convinced that they will allow us to work with more transparency in the management of public resources and in our fight against corruption. State income is increasing by nearly 20 per cent each month; we are already enjoying the benefits of this policy.

With regard to promoting the rule of law and the rights of the individual, we are making progress through the reforms taking place in the justice sector and with regard to human rights, national solidarity and gender equality. The Burundi Government's programme has placed promoting the rights of women and gender equality amongst its priorities. We urge the United Nations to give particular attention to this issue during its reform process. The Government also appeals for, and supports, a specific structure to ensure that women emerge from poverty and thus have genuine equality.

Still with regard to the rule of law, in addition to the 5,000 or more political prisoners already freed, on the occasion of the celebration of the forty-fourth anniversary of national independence on 1 July this year, we decided to release undocumented detainees being held under irregular circumstances. Similarly, the Government has started to improve conditions for prisoners who have been properly sentenced. However, we are aware that much more needs to be done in this area, with the support of the international community.

Establishing the rule of law and peacebuilding also depend on the peaceful settlement of the issue of land ownership. This was behind the Government's creation of the national commission dealing with land and other assets, whose task it is to settle disputes over the ownership or recovery of land and other assets that have changed hands during the various social and political conflicts in our history. Its work is an essential complement to that of the truth and reconciliation commission, with regard to which the Government of Burundi hopes agreement will soon be reached with the United Nations, because we are convinced that it will contribute to combating the fallout from genocide, as well as impunity in our country, and enhance the national reconciliation process.

With regard to national reconciliation, we firmly believe that sport is a very important factor in peacebuilding and reconstruction and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In Burundi we have taken measures in this area, and we hope that other countries going through a post-conflict period will follow our example.

The Government of Burundi continues to have to deal with a significant number of vulnerable people. We have today nearly 400,000 refugees, 120,000 internally displaced persons and thousands of others who need to be cared for, including persons with disabilities, orphans, widows, widowers and old people unsettled by the war. Our Government needs help to deal with this situation. Since the recent ceasefire agreement, refugees have started to return to Burundi en masse.

The Government of Burundi has also sought to improve the country's socio-economic situation. Aware of the general impoverishment of our people due to a decade of war, we prepared an emergency programme for the current year, and submitted it to donors for funding on 28 February. The programme covers in particular free primary education for all children of school age, counteracting hunger, access to health care, job creation, rehabilitation of the communication infrastructure, improving prison conditions and improving the management of public finances.

In order to ensure the proper management of funds provided by donors within the framework of cooperation with Burundi, the Government has established a national committee to coordinate aid. With the same desire for efficiency, we have created a national committee to monitor and manage Heavily Indebted Poor Countries funds, budgetary support and debt.

The Government's efforts to alleviate poverty include measures such as reducing the price of most essential commodities, the abolition of some taxes, free health care for children under the age of five and for mothers who give birth in state clinics, and the fight against AIDS. A new status for civil servants and a 15 per cent increase in their salary from 1 July this year are intended to give them more motivation and halt the decline in their standard of living.

However, our country's reconstruction, efforts to counteract poverty and the relaunching of Burundi's economy require more than an emergency programme. The preparation of a strategic framework for growth and counteracting poverty, covering a period of three years, meets this concern. We plan to organize next November a donors' round table on the basis of this strategic framework. We rely on the active participation of Burundi's partners, both long-standing partners and new ones, in order to help Burundi respond positively to the many priority expectations of our people, who are impatient to enjoy the dividends of peace at last.

At the same time, we are pursuing or launching other measures aimed at creating a favourable economic environment that is conducive to prosperity. They include liberalizing the coffee sector, simplifying customs procedures, liberalizing the circulation of currency through private financial institutions, constructing new communication routes and improving the road network. Furthermore, the investment code has been revised in order to encourage investment in Burundi.

The Government's adoption of the five-year plan for 2006-2010 and the launching of a study for the period to 2025 are part of this medium- and long-term strategy for our socio-economic and political development. We have thus sought to establish for our society a plan based on a minimum number of common objectives and a shared vision of the future of Burundi and its people.

We welcome the decision by the American Administration to put Burundi on the list of countries that benefit from the facilities offered in the framework of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. We have invited businessmen to organize themselves in order to take advantage of this new opportunity for our economy.

Burundi attaches great importance to regional integration initiatives. We take this opportunity to welcome the electoral process taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is now in its final stages. We hope that it will be successful and that it will result in the democratic establishment of legitimate institutions. Similarly, we welcome the signing of a ceasefire between the Government of Uganda and the LRA, which we sincerely hope will quickly lead to lasting peace.

We continue to be concerned over the continuing armed conflict in the Horn of Africa, Darfur and the Middle East, as well as by the deadlock in the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. As Members of the United Nations, we must work tirelessly to end these sad situations.

Terrorism is a further harsh reality that the world still confronts. Far from being discouraged, we must step up our vigilance and consider new initiatives to counteract this scourge and evil, and to deal with its underlying causes.

Globalization is one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century, but we also see it as an opportunity for developing countries to benefit from the considerable progress and advantages that it offers, provided it is combined with openness and autonomy.

For our part, we will spare no effort to make our contribution to building peace and prosperity. The election of Burundi to the Peacebuilding Commission is a source of pride and additional motivation to work to strengthen peace in our country and throughout the world. Unfortunately, changes in anti-democratic thinking and behaviour do not take place automatically in countries emerging from crisis, such as Burundi. However, we welcome the successes already achieved and our increased capacity to control the situation.

Our Organization is going through a critical period. Although the United Nations was set up "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", certain conflict situations have been haunting it for many years. It must therefore be made into an instrument at the service of all, able to inspire hope, dispel concerns and restore respect for order and international law. This mission must be fulfilled in full cooperation with regional organizations, whose effectiveness in conflict prevention and rapid intervention has already been proved, despite insufficient resources.

The General Assembly's agenda must reflect the main concerns of the day. These include, in particular, nuclear disarmament, which continues to poison international relations. Other concerns are combating the illegal trade in small arms, poverty and epidemics that kill on a large scale, such as AIDS and malaria. We commend the international drug purchasing facility (UNITAID) initiative, which gives hope to those suffering from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. It proves that a partnership between the North and the South can change the lives of millions of people throughout the world.

The new millennium was warmly welcomed. World leaders place great hopes in this new time, as shown by the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000, which were reaffirmed in the declaration of the summit of heads of State and Government in September 2005. Those Goals represent a platform that is particularly important for developing countries, landlocked countries and small island developing States in their efforts to combat hunger and poverty

and to promote health and education, to mention just a few subjects.

Other commitments were made in Paris and at the G-8 summit in Gleneagles, particularly for improved aid coordination and further aid and debt relief.

Before closing, I would like to express our deep gratitude to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, and to all the members of the Security Council, the European Union and the African Union, as well as to all the members of the Regional Initiative that have supported our peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts, which have resulted in the achievements already seen. We think in particular of certain countries of the region, such as Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa, which were tireless godfathers in facilitating our peace process. To all those partners, we again say a big "Thank you" for the remarkable success that my country has just witnessed with the signing of the ceasefire with the Palipehutu-FNL.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ravalomanana (*spoke in French*): I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for everything that he has done; he has been a great Secretary-General. Thanks to his clear vision, his commitment and his open-mindedness, he has greatly contributed to the development of the United Nations and the promotion of Africa. I thank him and his team.

Last year we discussed the Millennium Development Goals. It was clear that they could not be attained in the sub-Saharan countries if we did not make a considerable effort. The initiatives of the G-8, the World Bank, the European Union and other donors seemed to constitute a good foundation for a profound change. Have we noticed a profound change? I do not think so. The sad reality is that Africa receives less international assistance per capita than it did 20 years ago.

Let us be honest. The great ideas and the goodwill expressed in words rarely pass through the filters of existing structures and programmes. The files on Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, the Palestine question and the oil question have put the Africa file in the shade. It is a fact: Africa is not a priority for international authorities.

However, I remind the Assembly that we all set the Millennium Development Goals. These are common goals; therefore, their realization is also a common task. I remind the Assembly, too, that when we deal with issues we are also writing the destiny of hundreds of millions of human beings. Our decisions affect millions of children. Where is the fervent desire, then, to deliver on what we have promised to do for them? That is the paradox between what we preach and what we do.

I remind the Assembly that the task of this community is to avoid crises instead of dealing with crises. This institution should be a place not for firefighters, but for strategists.

I emphasize that the idea of one world, the foundation of globalization, cannot take us towards a fair and peaceful future as long as many poor countries are still marginalized. We want the same ticket to enter the international community as the European Union has given to Eastern European countries. We should all be on the same boat. However, many developing countries are still struggling behind it, swimming hard to try to catch up with it. How can we get out of this calamitous situation?

The Millennium Development Goals must remain the basis of our discussions and our actions, even if their achievement becomes more and more difficult. The industrialized countries have asked us, the

developing countries, to develop visions for our countries and to prepare road maps in order to achieve them. They have asked us to specify the Millennium Development Goals for our countries. They have asked us to increase our absorption capacity.

All of that is fair and understandable. However, the role of industrialized countries is not to play the referee, assess players and give out red cards. All countries, developed and developing alike, must play together. We must act together and have the same goal.

That is why I have decided to develop a new strategy in Madagascar, which we call the Madagascar Action Plan. The plan has been discussed throughout the regions of Madagascar with representatives of private and public organizations to create a sound basis for achieving our vision, "Madagascar — Naturally!", and the Millennium Development Goals.

The plan has also been discussed with members of the donor community. I told them that it is based on our vision and on the Millennium Development Goals, which we all set together. We should not be satisfied with existing means; we should mobilize all the means needed to achieve those goals.

I also told the donors that the Madagascar Action Plan is our common plan. We decide together how many men and women we want to — and can — pull out of poverty; how many poor children can have a better education; and how many children we can save by providing them with safe drinking water and vaccines.

Together we have to answer these questions, because they concern global tasks, common tasks. Hunger, poverty and disasters are among those issues that know no borders. Therefore, they are part of our shared responsibility.

We must change the approach used in the past, which was based on division. We must accept that the tasks are too burdensome to be carried out by weak people, to whom a new burden is given. I am talking about goals and measures that we must deal with together, according to the capacity of each of us.

International assistance for African development must undoubtedly be doubled or tripled in the short term. Donors must deliver on their promises in the short term if we really want to revive the economies of African countries.

People ask why sub-Saharan Africa has not experienced economic growth in the last few years. There are many reasons. They include internal conflicts, lack of good governance, instability and insecurity. However, the reduction of aid per capita during the last 20 years is one of the main reasons for the slowing of economic growth.

A further reduction of international aid has been proposed, so that developing countries will become — so it is said — much more independent quickly. That is a fundamental misunderstanding. To become independent, we need more international aid. Greater support is the shortest path towards independence. The more we invest in education, infrastructure and health, the more economic growth will be strengthened. And the more economic growth is strengthened, the quicker will the independence of developing countries become effective.

Investments in education, health, infrastructure and so on continue to be conditions for foreign direct investment. Private investment cannot replace them.

We should look at the results of the Marshall Plan and at the huge investments by the European Union in the new member States. They have been a huge success.

The question of absorption capacity has been discussed. Like all developing countries, we too have had problems, problems of cooperation between national and international partners. Basically, if there is a lack of capacity, it is the result of lack of cooperation and confidence.

Capacity must never be the factor that determines the volume of support. Where there is a lack of capacity in an area, it is necessary to strengthen that area. If there are not yet enough human resources available at the national level, it is necessary to call on international experts, while reinforcing national capacities.

In this context, I would like to add a few words on "country ownership". It is true that we in the developing countries know our problems very well. Therefore, we are ready to assume our responsibilities. Deciding on policies and actions must be the responsibility of nationals. The programmes of the donors have to be integrated into national programmes.

But it is also true that we are not always aware of our weaknesses and are not in phase with all the

values, rules, standards and procedures that are acknowledged in most industrialized countries. Often our fellow citizens do not appreciate the true worth of good governance.

Transferring the rules of good governance and standards of quality in education, health and infrastructure into our culture and our policies is essential. The transfer of knowledge is as urgent as is the transfer of capital. It is not only technical knowledge that we lack; the transfer of knowledge must also include values and the concept of professionalism.

Let us pool our capacities. What is at stake is so important that we must use all our capacities at the same time. Effectiveness must be the rule. Good cooperation between national and international experts is the basis of success.

And let us be more realistic, more pragmatic. The percentage of international aid spent on studies is far too high. Most studies are not implemented and simply repeat what previous studies have already found out.

I also recommend more effective decentralization, so that financial aid reaches the grass-roots communities. The financing mechanism is often slow and sometimes complex. It resembles a tortuous, stony path — and it is porous.

From time to time, we ask the same questions: How can we better structure international assistance? Which transfer of funds, for which area and with which measures is the most important? There is no simple answer. Each country, each region and each area requires a different answer. Theoretical discussions will not help.

However, there is a foundation that is crucial to all development: confidence. If a people do not feel confident, they will not contribute to development. If international firms do not feel confident, they will not come.

Confidence comes from opening up to the outside world, from stability, security and transparency. Good governance and democracy are also crucial. I assure the Assembly that Madagascar, my Government and I, will hold free and fair presidential elections in December.

During last year's session of the Assembly there was general agreement about the urgent need to increase international aid quantitatively and qualitatively in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We should therefore act accordingly.

North America, Europe and most countries in Asia and South America have experienced an era of prosperity and progress. Their peoples now have a good chance of enjoying a good standard of living until the age of 80.

The peoples of Africa do not have that chance. I therefore call upon the United Nations to develop and adopt a new, more dynamic and determined approach in favour of Africa. If that is done, opportunities will be more balanced and the world will be a fairer place.

We note that the industrialized countries can react quickly and launch large-scale operations if their vital interests are at stake. We desire now the same dynamic approach for Africa, because the basic needs of our people are still being ignored. Such an approach is in the interest of the African peoples, but it is also in the best interest of humanity. A prosperous Africa is an asset for the world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Canada.

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Harper (Canada) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me, as Prime Minister of Canada, to

speak to the Assembly today about the important issues confronting us as Members of the United Nations.

(*spoke in English*)

The United Nations was born from a combination of the essential needs of nations for stability and security and the higher ideals to which we should all aspire — freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

(*spoke in French*)

Our responsibilities in this Organization are as varied as they are important, and I cannot mention them all, nor do each the justice they deserve.

(*spoke in English*)

Nor can Canada be effective by diffusing our efforts across all of these matters. We must focus our considerable, but limited, resources where we can make a real difference. So let me turn to one particular and key area where global interests and higher purpose come directly together: the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

The United Nations recognized shortly after the attacks of 11 September 2001 that the Taliban regime, by its promotion of terrorism, was a threat to international peace and security.

(*spoke in French*)

Kofi Annan, our Secretary-General, whom we thank for his 10 years of loyal service, summed up in a few words the reason why we must combat terrorism. Terrorism, he said:

> "is a direct attack on the core values the United Nations stands for: the rule of law; the protection of civilians; mutual respect between people of different faiths and cultures; and peaceful resolution of conflicts."

(*spoke in English*)

That is why we in the United Nations have the responsibility to defeat terrorism. That is why, with unity and determination, the United Nations undertook its responsibility and its role in Afghanistan. And that is why Canada, which lost 24 of its own citizens on 9/11, answered the call.

And there we are. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is the United Nations single largest political mission. It is also, by far, Canada's biggest and most important overseas mission. So the United Nations mission is Canada's mission.

No fewer than 19 United Nations agencies are in Afghanistan. They are working tirelessly to help the Afghan people and their national Government shake off the perpetrators of terrorism and build a democratic and secure society.

At the same time, approximately 20,000 troops from 37 countries — roughly 2,500 Canadians included — are contributing to military efforts to help stabilize Afghanistan and eliminate the remnants of the Taliban regime. And we want to do that once and for all.

(*spoke in French*)

All our actions in Afghanistan — civilian and military — are being taken in accordance with the mandate of the Security Council. In short, we all stand together with the democratically elected Government of Afghanistan under the banner of the Organization that represents our collective will. In Afghanistan the United Nations mission is Canada's mission.

(*spoke in English*)

Let us be realistic. The challenges facing Afghanistan are enormous. There will be no quick fixes. Moreover, success cannot be assured by military means alone. This we all recognize. For success also requires a strong and unwavering civilian contribution: educators, engineers, elections advisers, direct and technical aid. The list is lengthy, but the contributions are essential.

That is why Canada is engaged in work like the rebuilding of girls' schools, ripped down and destroyed by the Taliban in their frenzy of hate.

(*spoke in French*)

That is why last spring we increased our development assistance, raising Canada's total contribution to nearly $1 billion over 10 years, to assist the people of Afghanistan.

(*spoke in English*)

These two actions — rebuilding a shattered society and providing a stable security environment — go hand in glove. And we are making progress — of that there is no doubt: 5 million refugees repatriated; over 5 million children enrolled in primary schools;

10 million Afghans registered to vote in successive democratic elections.

More than one quarter of the seats in Afghanistan's legislature are now held by women — remarkable in a nation where a few short years ago girls could not attend school and women had no human rights of any kind.

The success of this Mission, in providing both security and development, is vital to the safety, livelihood and very future of the Afghan people, but it is also vital to the health and future of this Organization.

(*spoke in French*)

Let us recall that the democratically elected Government of Afghanistan, led by President Karzai, requested the assistance of the United Nations and its Member States in the struggle against terror, intimidation, violence and oppression.

(*spoke in English*)

We have responded. But we have not made Afghanistan's progress irreversible — not yet. Canadian defence personnel, diplomats and development officers are on the front lines of the fight for the future of Afghanistan. Canadians feel tremendous pride in the leadership role they have assumed, and we share equal grief for the casualties they have taken. We are therefore acutely aware that the United Nations job in Afghanistan is not yet done. We have no illusions about the difficulties that still lie before us. Difficulties do not daunt us. But lack of common purpose and will in this body would.

After all, if we fail the Afghan people, we will be failing ourselves. For this is the United Nations strongest Mission and therefore our greatest test. Our collective will and credibility are being judged. We cannot afford to fail. We will succeed.

(*spoke in French*)

The United Nations is also facing other challenges — in Haiti, for example. Canada has played an important role there, dispatching troops, police and development officers to support United Nations activities aimed at restoring stability and establishing democracy. And we are offering the country $100 million in economic development assistance. However, we must act together to ensure that our multinational force paves the way for stability and progress, and empowers the Government of Haiti to help its citizens, the poorest in the western hemisphere.

(*spoke in English*)

Darfur, too, is a significant challenge, as multinational security efforts are transferred from the African Union to the United Nations. It is also a test of the principle that this body endorsed last year — the responsibility to protect. The United Nations has authorized a mission there, with a robust mandate. But will the Government of Sudan accept it?

In the Middle East, Canada has joined the international community in the reconstruction of Lebanon. But will the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon ensure security on Israel's northern border and lead to progress in the Middle East peace process?

Nuclear proliferation threatens us all. Are we prepared to ensure that Security Council decisions will be implemented fully? Will we act to halt activities that have no reasonable purpose other than the acquisition of nuclear weapons?

These are some of the tests the whole world must face. And there are other challenges internal to this Organization.

Will the new Human Rights Council become a forum where human rights are genuinely put above political maneuvering? Or will it emulate the fate of its failed predecessor organization? I must say that the early signals suggest that too little has changed and that the page has not yet been turned.

And what will be done to make progress on United Nations management reform?

(*spoke in French*)

Earlier this year Canada's new Government was given a mandate to make our national Government more accountable and more responsible, to ensure that taxpayers get full value for their money and to pursue a clear, focused agenda that produces tangible results. The United Nations should accept nothing less.

(*spoke in English*)

This Organization must become more accountable and more effective. Management reform must continue, and at an accelerated pace. The taxpayers of Member nations, Canadians among them, make significant financial contributions to this Organization. They have the right to expect stronger,

more independent oversight mechanisms, more robust accountability for how funds are spent, and human resources practices that are based on merit.

(*spoke in French*)

I have just described the tests by which this Organization will be judged. Canada wants this to be a positive judgment. We were there when the United Nations was founded. Like the other countries, we were motivated by a pressing need to establish a new international consensus in a world devastated by war. And, like the others, we were motivated by our own pragmatic interests and noble aspirations for all of humanity. More than 60 years later the formula remains the same.

(*spoke in English*)

The challenge has always been the same: to bring nations together to build a better world by forging consensus on common purposes and by finding the political will to translate these into action.

When these goals have been achieved, Canada has always been with the Organization — through the war against fascism, the cold war, dozens of United Nations-sponsored peacekeeping missions, and more recent multinational military engagements in the Balkans and the Persian Gulf.

Today Afghanistan leads the list of challenges that we face collectively — peacebuilding in a nation where there is not yet peace, where progress requires a wide range of capabilities undertaken by a wide array of our Member States.

My earnest hope is that we will say with pride to future generations of leaders: We, the United Nations, took up that responsibility in Afghanistan, rose to the challenge and met it firmly, collectively, successfully. In this endeavour, as with the others I have outlined, Canada will be there with the Organization at every step along the way.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Canada for the statement he has just made.

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. José Sócrates, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. José Sócrates, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José Sócrates, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sócrates (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese, English text provided by the delegation*): I would like to begin, like previous speakers, by extending my warmest congratulations to Ms. Haya Rasheed Al-Khalifa, the first woman in nearly 40 years to take up the position of President of the General Assembly. This is good news for international politics. I wish her every success in discharging the mandate on which she is now beginning, in which she can be assured of Portugal's firm support. We are confident that she will continue the excellent work carried out by her predecessor, Minister Jan Eliasson, whom I am very happy to remember here.

This session of the Assembly is also notable for being the last during which Secretary-General Kofi Annan will be in office. I therefore solemnly express on behalf of the Portuguese people our heartfelt, deep appreciation for the way in which he has carried out his duties over the last 10 years, contributing concretely and decisively to international peace and stability in a world that we all wish were more just. It was on his watch — and with his indispensable personal help — that we saw the birth of the new State of Timor-Leste. Portugal will not forget that this was one of the great recent victories of the United Nations, in peoples' fight for self-determination, and in defence of the values in the Charter.

This Organization has carried out a crucial task in Timor-Leste, in maintaining peace, consolidating the rule of law and, together with donor countries, creating the foundations for a more prosperous economic and social future for the Timorese people.

There is still a long way to go, it is true. But it is important that the Timorese people be aware that they can count on the United Nations. Unfortunately, the

recent internal crisis raised a serious question about security, and it is vital that this be resolved if the country is to find stability.

We therefore applaud the new United Nations peace mission, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste, which represents a continuity of the significant investment made by the international community, to which Portugal belongs. We participate actively in this Mission, consistent with our ongoing commitment, going back over three decades, to the political process of the new State of Timor-Leste.

In this regard, I would also like to pay due tribute to the memory of Sergio Vieira de Mello, brutally murdered three years ago in Baghdad in the service of the United Nations. We will not forget all that he did for the just cause of the Timorese people, and in defence of the values that the United Nations embodies.

This last decade has been one of great changes. The United Nations has had undoubted successes, but there have also been missed opportunities. Many accuse the Organization of undue complexity, slowness in its decision-making process and excessive bureaucracy. It is true that diplomacy requires time, but it does produce results. If there is something that we have learned over these last years, it is that there is no alternative to multilateralism; multilateralism is where the United Nations plays a determinant role.

The United Nations is today one of the greatest guarantors of our collective security. It is our duty to preserve and strengthen it. It is an investment from which we all stand to benefit. Each one of us is a Member of this Organization not only to serve and promote our own national interests, but also — and I would go so far as to say above all — to fulfil the hopes and dreams of the people of the whole world.

The world today, as we know, is full of risks and threats that no country can face alone. If we do not unite in our efforts, we are halfway down the road to failure. Reality, particularly in recent years, has proved this to us quite clearly.

I would therefore like to underline Portugal's commitment to multilateralism, because we firmly believe that this is the path where one can best uphold the essential values of peace and development.

A big part of this multilateral action rests on a dialogue between cultures and civilizations. It is through this dialogue that we assume a collective responsibility to overcome obstacles, prejudices, preconceived ideas and, principally, ignorance. Our challenge here in this dialogue is not to limit ourselves to mere declarations, but to take firm and concrete steps towards greater interaction between peoples and cultures.

Despite the huge uncertainties and misunderstandings in the world today, we have a set of principles — contained in our Charter — that can inspire us and guide us. They are our best help.

The dialogue between cultures and civilizations also imposes demanding domestic political agendas, in the respect for differences and the inclusion of all citizens in society — the inclusion of immigrants; the inclusion of all, irrespective of their beliefs or religions.

On the other hand, the dialogue between civilizations also imposes steps forward on the international scene, the strengthening of economic bonds between North and South. The strengthening of world trade mechanisms constitutes an investment in our own security, and is an essential part of that dialogue; hence the importance of overcoming the obstacles of the Doha Round in the context of the current negotiations in the World Trade Organization. We all have to be prepared to give up something so that at the end of the day everyone can win.

One of the biggest political challenges that we face in this dialogue of cultures and civilizations is undoubtedly the Middle East. The region remains one of the main focal points of instability in the world. We all have in our minds the painful images of the most recent crisis in Lebanon, where we witnessed the suffering of civilians on both sides of the conflict. This reinforces all the more the need to actively pursue a permanent and balanced solution, which may bring about a dynamic of hope and peace in the region.

The Middle East is not a military issue. The Middle East is, above all, one of the greatest political and diplomatic challenges that today's world faces. We should not, therefore, miss the window of opportunity offered to us by Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). It is a challenge where the United Nations and the European Union assume shared responsibilities in promoting peace and stability, through an effective multilateral dialogue.

Portugal fulfils its duty and supports the urgent implementation of this resolution, and we are present in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon to help implement it.

I would like to draw attention, once more, to Africa. Portugal has given it great attention, and invested great efforts there, and it is our duty to ensure that the continent is not forgotten. There is progress in Africa that we should encourage, and we also have a historical responsibility on which the developed world should not and cannot turn its back.

I am pleased to stress here today the determination with which the European Union has been reinforcing its partnership and its strategy with the African continent. The current drafting of a Euro-African joint strategy will lead to a script for our relations with Africa in the fundamental areas of peace and security, good governance and human rights, regional trade and integration, and also aspects relating to human development.

I stress the word "joint". All of us share the responsibility — Africans and Europeans alike. I trust that the conditions will soon be right for this strategy to be adopted. And I hope that it will be at the highest level, when we hold in Lisbon the second European Union-Africa summit.

In recent years, with the consolidation of the African Union and various regional organizations and initiatives, very significant progress has been made in many fields on the African continent, and this has been driven by the continent itself and its own institutions. It is our duty to recognize these developments, support them with renewed support and vigour, and develop them further.

I would also like to recall that last July, in Bissau, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries celebrated its tenth anniversary. This organization has been consolidating itself and strengthening its involvement within the United Nations system, where it currently holds observer status, presenting itself as a credible organization in the fostering of international partnerships.

In Bissau, on the tenth anniversary, we pledged our commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, by defining and implementing a general cooperation strategy where the highest priority is given to achieving these Goals. This is our priority in our domestic policy in Portugal; at the top of our priorities are the Millennium Development Goals. We shall implement them with a bilateral and multilateral cooperation strategy that will help to fight poverty, alleviate the pressure on migratory flows and promote sustainable development.

September in New York, above all else, should not be some sort of annual pilgrimage to rediscover this Organization. At the end of the day, the credibility of the United Nations is in our hands.

We all face the same challenges. But, at the same time, they give us the opportunity to live in accordance with our ideals and put into practice the principles that have guided us for more than six decades. The only way out is for us to look for answers together. That is why we need a stronger and more cohesive United Nations. We owe this to ourselves. We owe it to our children. But, above all, we owe it to future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Sócrates, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint

Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Our President arises in this Assembly as a breath of fresh air and presides as an inspiration to women, particularly in the Middle East, and to human beings all over the world who treasure the stone that the builder rejects and that becomes the head cornerstone. I am sure that her presidency will make a positive and lasting impact on our General Assembly. I thank her very much for being and doing.

Humanity's condition today is difficult, complex and challenging, yet pregnant with possibilities for a better future. Everywhere the faces of men and women are strained and anxious; yet, amidst the anxieties, pain and sorrows there is joyous laughter, which soothes the soul and summons the human race to embrace the promise of a redeeming grace, which eschews hate, greed, callousness, oppression, injustice and violence. It is still possible for this divided world of inequity and the inhumanity of man to man to sing with meaning our redemption song of peace and justice, prosperity and freedom, democracy and tolerance, unity amidst diversity, equality and mutual respect.

This quest to mend the broken world is grounded in the ideals that constitute the core of the United Nations. This idealism seeks not a world of perfection, but one of goodness, one of civilization over barbarism, of humanity over inhumanity. The world, especially the majority of its inhabitants who happen to be poor and disadvantaged amidst an orgy of plenty that resides in a minority, looks to the United Nations as their hope, as a brightness that illuminates, not blinds. I bring this simple but powerful message from a small, developing country in the nearby Caribbean Sea on behalf of the marginalized of the world, without the vanity of a pretentious hegemony, an arrogance of power, or a triumphalism of a presumed manifest destiny. It is both necessary and desirable to speak this truth to power.

So more than 80 per cent of the people who reside in the developing world, and, indeed, all right-thinking persons, want and demand in this regard coherent leadership from a reformed United Nations that is true to its central mandate to serve humanity well. Unfortunately, the reformation of the United Nations is moving at a snail's pace, which frustrates its work, undermines its efficacy, and damages its credibility.

To be sure, some modest progress has been made by way of the establishment of a new Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. But, frankly, too much time is wasted on fussing and fighting on esoteric issues touching and concerning the so-called mandate review and management reform, rather than focusing on the critical matter of the implementation of the "development resolution" adopted by the General Assembly. In the process, too, let us have a reform of the Security Council that is meaningful and democratic.

The world's marginalized and disadvantaged look askance at a United Nations that daily seeks to choreograph the dancing of angels on the head of a pin. They care very little for the bureaucratic harangue that the United Nations "system-wide coherence" has been addressed and enhanced, important as that may be for some professional diplomats. The world's people want to know, and to see the practical evidence, that the United Nations is tackling in a purposeful way the issues of global poverty, environmental degradation, climate change, the empowerment of women, the protection of children, the promotion of peace and security, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the provision of clean water and an adequate supply of food, among other such telling requisites.

Undoubtedly, many, if not most, of the Governments of the rich and powerful countries show signs of fatigue and disengagement towards the developing world. This is evident in their parsimony on official development assistance and their failure and/or neglect to advance meaningfully the Doha Development Round. Better must be done here.

Please note that my strictures are levelled at the Governments of those countries, and not their people or their civilizations. Sufficient persuasive evidence exists that the people in many, if not most, of these rich countries are sensitive to the concerns of the developing world, but their Governments do not sufficiently reflect these sensitivities, despite their occasional rhetoric to the contrary. Accordingly, the peoples and civilizations across national boundaries must link themselves in a tighter nexus or bond, with or without the mediating formal state apparatuses, and name and shame those Governments that ought to be named and shamed.

In this regard, the proposal before the United Nations for an alliance of civilizations holds immense promise, provided that it is not captured by those states that hanker after an ignoble, unattainable, unsustainable and fundamentally immoral hegemony. Our Caribbean civilization, and its Vincentian component, stands ready and willing to be part of this magnificent quest for an ennobling brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity.

While many rich countries turn aside from the development thrust of the world's marginalized and disadvantaged, there is an encouraging trend towards more and better South-South cooperation. In the case of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, we are benefiting from a closer integration network through the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Caribbean Community Single Market and Economy. Further, countries such as Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico, Malaysia and Taiwan, among others, have special and model relations with our country.

Recently, at the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Cuba, the leaders of this 118-member body redefined its purpose and mandate, in an increasingly unipolar world, to embrace a thorough-going development agenda and to facilitate the building of a more peaceful, just and secure architecture of international relations. This renewed enthusiasm of the Non-Aligned Movement strengthens the hands and voices of those who truly believe that a better, more civilized world is possible and nigh.

Next year, in March, people of African descent and all freedom-loving peoples and nations will commemorate and celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of the passage of the act abolishing the British trade in African slaves to the Caribbean and the Americas. This is an occasion for historical reclamation and the righting of historic wrongs. The trade in, and enslavement of, Africans was a monstrous crime against humanity and an exercise in genocide unmatched in the history of the Western world.

European nations and their North American cousins have failed and/or refused to acknowledge this sufficiently or at all. There has been no apology for this crime against humanity and this genocide, conducted over a prolonged period. There has been no practical recompense in the form of reparations to the affected nations and peoples in Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas. Surely, this issue must be put squarely on the agenda of the United Nations for speedy resolution.

Without in any way diluting the force of this representation — indeed in bolstering it — we find it necessary and desirable to link it in our Caribbean region with the genocide of indigenous peoples, including the Callinago and the Garifuna of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and the wholly wrong and inhumane exploitation by colonialism and imperialism of indentured labour from Africa, Madeira, India and China after the abolition of African slavery in the Caribbean. Europe has much to answer for on these matters, and should be made to answer properly and appropriately. Historic wrongs not righted remain scars on the soul of the oppressor and the oppressed alike, which continue to haunt over the ages; it is a hateful burden that must be lifted. This dark night must give way to a brightened day.

Of all the tragedies engulfing our modern world, few touch the human soul and spirit as does the condition of the people in Darfur and Palestine. The entire world knows who are responsible for the crimes against humanity in Darfur and in all areas of the Palestinian homeland. Yet the basic human and national rights of the people in those geographic regions are trampled upon daily by alien forces. Meanwhile, the United Nations appears helpless and its authority is undermined. Surely, the time is long past for a resolution of these conflicts, and other enduring conflicts worldwide, including Lebanon and Western Sahara. Oppression will not endure indefinitely. That is the powerful lesson of history. The people's right to self-determination must be fully respected.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is pleased to see Haiti's restoration to democracy. The cynical ouster of the former democratically elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in February 2004, ushered in immense suffering in Haiti under a so-called interim administration installed by imperialism. The Haitian people, who endureth for ever, must be applauded for their commitment to democracy and progress. Their election of President René Préval represents a strong rebuke of those who mistakenly believe that the dangling of money is everything. We heartily congratulate the new Haitian Government and pledge to work closely with it in its efforts to develop its heroic country, the land of Toussaint L'Ouverture.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines again pleads with the United Nations to permit Taiwan, a democratic and progressive country of 23 million people and a legitimate political expression of the Chinese civilization, to be accorded its rightful admission to the United Nations and its specialized agencies. There is no adequate justification for the continued exclusion of Taiwan from participation in the numerous global exchanges in the several international bodies, including the United Nations.

Further, the United Nations has a major role to play in ensuring an easing of tensions across the Taiwan straits. Aggressive conduct must be restrained in a context in which Taiwan is committed to peace and a comprehensive political dialogue.

Modern terrorism is a barbarism out of sync with civilized life. It affects adversely not only powerful nations, but developing ones in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The evil of terrorism, including state-sponsored terrorism, must be fought relentlessly. It must be given no space to thrive. At the same time, terrorism must be attacked sensibly and not in a counter-productive way. Too many innocent lives have been lost through terrorist acts. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines pledges itself to continue to work resolutely and fearlessly, without hypocrisy, with all nations and the United Nations, to eliminate the dastardly scourge called terrorism and its causes.

Permit me to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his splendid work at the United Nations and throughout the world. His accomplishments have been immense, and we applaud him as his incumbency draws to a close. We wish him and his family well.

I conclude by reaffirming that it is our sacred duty to humanity and those unborn to ensure that we contribute to a safer, more peaceful, more prosperous, more civilized world. We who have come from yesterday with our limiting burdens must face tomorrow with our enabling strengths. We must never forget that in our work here at the United Nations it becomes possible to glimpse morning before the sun, possible to see early where sunset might stain anticipated night. Let us thus not sleep to dream, but dream to change the world, for the better.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Boubacar, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Boubacar, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Boubacar, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ould Boubacar (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first to warmly congratulate the President on her election. We firmly believe that her experience will guarantee an excellent grasp of all the issues and that she will carry out her task with wisdom and skill.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his admirable and tireless efforts in the reform process of the United Nations and moving it forward.

I also thank and congratulate Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, and his team for their untiring contribution to improving the work methods of the Organization in order to achieve its objectives in all areas.

I also take the opportunity to welcome the Republic of Montenegro as a new Member of the United Nations.

We particularly pay tribute to the important resolutions dealing with the creation of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Without a doubt, those two new bodies will contribute to improving the Organization's activities to find

solutions to two of the main concerns of the peoples and Member Governments of the United Nations, namely, conflicts and wars, and the impact that they have on the rights and dignity of individuals and communities. We are all aware of the direct impact of those issues on peace, security, development, justice and democracy throughout the world.

We wish to stress the resolutions and the important work of the United Nations between the two sessions, namely conferences and summits dealing with the information society and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as well as meetings on development, alleviating poverty, protecting the environment, promoting the advancement of women, and dealing with unemployment and the issues of migration.

How we meet the need for development, security and peace throughout the world will depend on how we deal with the issues of violence and terrorism. Since the phenomenon of terrorism is universal in nature, the solution to it must also be found through a global vision that is anchored in understanding and dialogue between civilizations and nations, a vision that rejects confrontation and conflict and seeks to overcome poverty, illiteracy and social, scientific and technical underdevelopment.

In Mauritania we reject terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We remain faithful to our Islamic values of solidarity, understanding and tolerance, which reject violence and extremism.

My country, Mauritania, reiterates its support for peace and for relaunching the negotiation process on all tracks. That is the only way to put an end to the conflict in the Middle East, on the basis of international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map, which will guarantee the Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon and allow the Palestinian people to restore its legitimate rights and establish an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

With regard to Western Sahara, Mauritania supports the measures taken by the United Nations and its Secretary-General to find a lasting solution that guarantees stability in that region and enjoys the support of all stakeholders.

Concerning Iraq, we are following very closely the changing political, security and humanitarian situation in that fraternal country. We note with satisfaction the success achieved by the Iraqi Government in rebuilding State institutions. We reaffirm our support for the unity of Iraq, its territorial integrity and independence and for non-interference in its internal affairs.

After the changes of 3 August 2005, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania ushered in a new era in its political history. The new era started with the creation of a pluralist, democratic system based on the guarantee of equality and justice for all. It enshrines the peaceful assumption of authority and transparency in management and administrative reform, while firmly establishing the mechanisms of good governance.

These choices have been implemented on the basis of a sound experiment carried out throughout the country using all the active forces of our people, including civil institutions, political parties, trade unions and the transition Government, through a programme of action for justice and democracy that has been implemented with the informed and effective participation of all stakeholders. It includes constitutional reform, reform of the administration of justice, administrative reform to combat corruption, and reform of the electoral system by creating an independent national electoral commission on the basis of transparency and by encouraging the participation of women.

In order to ensure total neutrality in the elections, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy has decreed that the President, members of the Military Council, the Prime Minister and members of the civilian transition Government are ineligible to take part in future municipal, legislative and presidential elections.

The absence of real democracy, free choice and fair elections led the Military Council for Justice and Democracy to intervene to end the political stalemate that the country was experiencing before 3 August 2005.

Here, on behalf of the Mauritanian people, I would like to thank sincerely all fraternal and friendly countries and international organizations and bodies that have supported our reform process and helped and supported us through its various stages.

Mauritania is keen to contribute to strengthening the links of fraternity, cooperation and solidarity in its region, in line with the common aspirations of our

peoples. Within this framework, we affirm our unswerving faith in building an Arab Maghreb as a strategic, non-negotiable choice.

We are also profoundly attached to the spirit of fraternity and solidarity on our African continent and to the close relations that link our country to all fraternal African countries. Our country will continue to be faithful to strengthening the basis for dialogue, exchange and understanding between peoples and civilizations, particularly within the 5+5 forum and the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean process.

The major changes that have taken place on the international scene in recent years require a review and reform of the organs and method of work of the United Nations — in particular, by revitalizing the role of the General Assembly and ensuring respect for its resolutions, by reactivating the Economic and Social Council and by making the Security Council more representative. All this should aim to take account not only of important regions in the world, such as Africa and Latin America, or important regional groups, but also of industrialized countries that make major contributions to the United Nations, such as Germany and Japan.

We also believe that the Security Council today must improve its methods of work so that it can fulfill its task of maintaining international peace and security.

In closing, I would like to express the wish that the work of this session will be crowned with success.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Boubacar, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.